

KERA Initiative Summary

4/29/04

Primary Program

Kentucky's Primary Program recognizes that children develop at different rates, with different needs and with different learning styles. The "primary school program" means that part of the elementary school program in which children are enrolled from the time they begin school until they are ready to enter the fourth grade. Notwithstanding any statute to the contrary, successful completion of the primary school program shall be a prerequisite for a child's entrance into fourth grade (KRS 158.031).

Primary programs vary from school to school, but each shall include the following critical attributes:

- *Developmentally Appropriate* - Instructional practices that address the physical, aesthetic, cognitive, emotional and social domains of children and that permit them to progress through an integrated curriculum according to their unique learning needs.
- *Multi-age, Multi-ability Classrooms* - Flexible grouping and regrouping of children of different ages, gender and abilities who may be assigned to the same teacher for more than one year.
- *Continuous Progress* – A student's unique progression through the primary school program at his/her own rate without comparison to the rate of others or consideration of the number of years in school. Retention and promotion within the primary school program are not compatible with continuous progress.
- *Authentic Assessment* - Assessment that occurs continually in the context of the learning environment and reflects actual learning experiences that can be documented through observation, anecdotal records, journals, logs, actual work samples, conferences and other methods. Authentic Assessment consists of ongoing documentation of what students learn and do in day-to-day classroom activities. Authentic Assessment includes a teacher's notes on what he/she observes a child doing in class, work samples, logs of books read, projects completed, experiments conducted, information obtained from conferences with parents and other methods.
- *Qualitative Reporting Methods* - Progress communicated through a variety of home-school communiqués, which address the growth and development of the whole child as he/she progresses through the primary school program.
- *Professional Teamwork* - All professional staff in the primary school program communicating and planning on a regular basis and using a variety of instructional delivery systems such as team-teaching and collaborative teaching.
- *Positive parent involvement* - The establishment of productive relationships between the school and the home, individuals or groups that enhance communication.

A primary classroom looks much different from the traditional classroom. Students move around the room actively engaged in their learning, working in instructional centers that offer manipulatives, books, developmentally-appropriate writing materials, technology, art supplies and quiet space. Small groups of students work together on projects, sharing information and ideas. Teachers guide student learning through a child-centered curriculum that supports problem solving strategies and addresses academic expectations based on the Kentucky Program of Studies and Core Content for Assessment.

Statutory References: KRS 157.320, 156.160, 158.030